3

LETTERS

TO THE

AUTHOR OF AN ARTICLE

IN THE

EDINBURGH REVIEW,

ON

"EVANGELICAL PREACHING,"

IN WHICH

THE PRINCIPLES OF THAT WRITER ARE SHEWN TO BE IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO THE WORD OF GOD, AND THE DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE ARE STATED AND DEFENDED.

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PREFACE.

At first sight, nothing appears more astonishing than that so many different and opposite doctrines should be taken out of the Scriptures. Can it be possible that in a revelation from God, with respect to the most momentous of all questions—the way of salvation—there should be just ground for all the innumerable variety of plans that have professedly been deduced from it? Are the Scriptures, like the heathen oracles, designed to be capable of different and opposite interpretations? If they are intelligible, why do not all men understand them in the same sense? Is it not the highest interest of every man to know the plan that God has appointed for sinners to escape the wrath to come? What then is the cause of this wonderful difference among those to whom this revelation is addressed? We have the answer to this question in the denunciation of God by Ezekiel against the false prophets. "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy *out of their own hearts*, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow *their own spirit*, and have seen nothing!" Here the reason of the error of the false prophets, is, that "they prophesied out of their own hearts," and "followed their own spirit," instead of submitting to the predictions that God had delivered by the true prophets. Had not Jeremiah, for the space of forty years, in the most precise manner, and with a variety of emblems, declared to the people of Israel, that their city should be destroyed, and themselves carried into capti-

vity to Babylon? Why then was not this believed? Why did they not return from their idolatry, as the only means by which they could escape this dreadful catastrophe? Was it not the true interest of both people and prophets to understand the mind of God on this subject? Was not error in this matter the greatest evil? Yet neither prophets nor people believed God. On the contrary, the prophets predicted peace, and encouraged the people to hope that the city and temple should not be destroyed, and that they themselves should not be carried to Babylon. The false prophets prophesied out of their own hearts. They predicted not what God had declared on this subject, but what was agreeable to their own wishes. Instead of following the spirit of the Lord, they followed their own spirits, and declared visions, when in reality they had seen nothing.

In these false teachers of Israel, we have a picture of all false teachers in every age. Their doctrines are not taken from the Scriptures, but from their own hearts. They follow their own spirit, instead of searching for the mind of the Spirit of the Lord in his word. They proclaim their dogmas as the truths of revelation, when in revelation they have found no such thing. They have seen nothing; yet they utter their own sentiments as the dictates of the Holy Spirit. This strikingly applies to the Author of the Article in the "EDINBURGH REVIEW," which is the subject of the following Strictures. His doctrines are not founded in Scripture; they are in direct opposition to Scripture; yet he pretends that they have their foundation in the Word of God. He "speaks out of his own heart," and "follows his own spirit," yet he ushers in his errors with a "Thus saith the Lord."

To the last moment, the false prophets of Israel continued to deceive the people, by assurances that the predictions which denounced evil, should not be accomplished. Thus they surrounded the city with a wall, that on the outside appeared to the people sufficient, but which was incapable of withstanding assault. "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:

Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury, to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar; and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; to wit, the prophets of Israel, which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God."—Ezek. xiii. 10—16.

Here we see that these false prophets deceived the people with the cry of peace, and assured them that the city should not be taken. Yet destruction was at their very door. So shall it be with every refuge of lies invented by false teachers, in order to deliver sinners from the wrath to come. They may build up a wall for defence, and cover it over with untempered mortar, which may give it an appearance of strength, but it will fall when the storm of the Divine fury assails it. Instead of saving the inhabitants of the city, it will crush them under its ruins.

The same disposition that originated the false refuges of the prophets and people of Israel, models the doctrines of the Scriptures in every age. The Scriptures give an account of man, that is not at all agreeable to himself, and therefore false teachers employ all their subtlety, to alter or modify that account. The Scriptures represent men, by nature, as the children of wrath,—as totally corrupted and ruined: false teachers, speaking "out of their own hearts," and "following their own spirit," force the Scriptures either to retract or qualify their

assertions. The Scriptures assure us, that without a spiritual birth, men cannot enter into the kingdom of God: this doctrine is not agreeable to the human mind, and therefore it continues to represent this spiritual birth as nothing but a change from heathenism, to a profession of Christianity; or, if the language of Scripture is refractory, and will not yield to this torture, still man must have the glory of *choosing* whether the Spirit of God shall bring him to life. The Scriptures assure us, that men are not justified by works, either in whole or in part; but that they are justified freely by faith in the Lord Jesus, who gave himself to redeem his people from their sins: yet false teachers, "speaking out of their own hearts," evade the clearest, and strongest, and fullest declarations to this purpose, and assure men, that their works must have some share in their acceptance. If all other expedients fail, faith itself is turned into a work; salvation is supposed to be by faith, because of the excellence of faith as a moral quality. There is not one declaration of Scripture that has not been set aside by this pernicious principle. On every subject, the Scriptures are obliged to speak, not what God has given them in charge, but what the wisdom of this world thinks most suitable to be spoken. In interpreting the Scriptures, false teachers "speak out of their own hearts,"—"follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing." Their object is not to ascertain with precision what God has spoken, but to make God speak what is agreeable to their own system.

The Lord calls the prophets of Israel, *foolish prophets.* No doubt they were at the head of the wise men of this world, and had the greatest influence in their country. They might look down with insolent contempt on the "silly creatures that saw their lost and perishing condition by nature;" they might value themselves on account of their superior attainments; but in the estimation of Jehovah, they were fools. And were they not fools in the highest sense of the word? Was it not the most consummate folly to hope to evade the divine judgments, by denying them? A short time discovered their folly; and the ruin of Jesusalem, with the

captivity of the people, proved them to be prophets of lies. And are they wise, who attempt to banish the evangelical doctrines from the Bible? Will not God, though he be long silent, at length arise to speak on this subject? The storm will at last fall down upon this crazy wall, and crush the false teachers under their own works. Let modern false teachers read their doom in God's denunciations against the prophets of Israel. "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith; and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God."—Ezek. xiii. 6—9.

EDINBURGH REVIEW.

EVANGELICAL PREACHING.

LETTER I.

he uses false reasoning, let him be exposed; if he employs quibbles or disingenuous resources, let him be lashed with the utmost severity; but if he is honest in the declaration of his sentiments, let him not be reproached, because he assumes that two opposite systems cannot both be the gospel. Must a noble lord decline his title, and share his estate with a pretender, till the matter is determined by the judge? If, relying on his own exclusive right, he treats all other claimants as mere pretenders, is he worthy of *obloquy and invective?* You glory in morality, and blame the Evangelical Preachers for not sufficiently enforcing it; but your own morality is most immoral.

The manner of speaking which you reprobate is exemplified and justified by the Apostle Paul. He speaks of *his gospel*, which insinuates, that there would be other doctrines claiming the title of the Gospel of Christ: he speaks of *another gospel*, and declares that it is not truly a gospel—"which is not another," importing that every doctrine different from what he preached, whatever may be its pretensions, is not the gospel that saves sinners. In designating one system of doctrines as evangelical, in denying this designation to every other system, what more is done than the Apostle has done in the beginning of his Epistle to the Galatians? Instead of admitting that different systems have an equal claim to be designated the gospel, he declares that the perversion of the gospel is ruinous. "There be some," says he, "that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." This is a hard saying, who can bear it!

You speak of other designations as being equally unjustly assumed as exclusively belonging to this obnoxious party; "such as saints, people of God, and the like." This you represent as "disparaging to the rest of the Christian world." By this you seem to admit that these titles exclusively belong to what you call the Christian world. Now, is not this disparaging to what I suppose you would call virtuous heathens, and to all who do not profess Christianity? Why do you adopt titles which cannot include these persons? The titles referred to do not justly belong to all who call themselves Christians, more than they do to heathens, or Mahomedans. Let them be given to those on whom the Holy Spirit conferred them. Let persons who have the holiness of the truth be called saints. Shall persons who are not only unholy, but who ridicule holiness, be called *saints*, or

holy persons, as a designation? Most of those who call themselves *Christians* would think it a disparagement to be called *saints*. These evangelicals, it seems, "evince considerable aptitude in discovering that they are objects of persecution, and in availing themselves of whatever presumption is thence to be drawn of the genuineness of their pretensions; not seeming to recollect, that though the people of God are taught to expect persecutions, all persecuted people, or all who conceive themselves persecuted, are not necessarily people of God." Certainly it requires in any person very great sagacity to discover when he is persecuted! It is a most mystical subject. Are we then reduced to such a situation, that we should not confidently say that we are persecuted, when, on account of our doctrines, we are hated and ill treated? But we are admonished that all persecuted people are not necessarily people of God. We need not the admonition. We believe that a man may suffer for his evil conduct, as well as for the truth. Persecution is indeed not a test of truth; yet it is of great importance for the Christian to know, that it will always be the lot of genuine Christianity, as far as its enemies have the power. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake," says Christ, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." If we have not the truth of Christ, and if the evil speaking is not false, we claim no share in the blessing.

"We would advise the persons of whom we speak," you say, "well to consider whether the hostility of which they complain, or rather of which they boast, is not the natural return for those terms of contempt and reprobation which they are in the habit of so freely bestowing on all beyond their own *clique*; and (since we are not aware that in this age or country religion is ever visited with obloquy *as* such) whether it is by the maintenance of religious truth, or religious duty that reproach is incurred, and not rather by dogmatical absurdities, or superstitious observances." Very kind advice. On this extract, it is quite sufficient to observe, that the system designated Evangelical, is hated; and that its professors are exposed to persecution, let their lives be ever so blameless. The grossest dogmatical absurdities and superstitious observances are not so much the object of the displeasure of the world, as the unadulterated gospel of God. The persons to whom you allude, speak not of others with contempt; but they faithfully declare the testimony of God with re-

spect to the character and prospects of all unbelievers. The condemnation of the enemies of the gospel is not gratifying to their feelings, but is a deep and constant source of sorrow. Every real Christian will have feelings in unison with those of the Apostle, when he so earnestly and affectionately declares,—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my bretheren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." When in the further examination of your views, I shall tell you that you have a gospel different from that of Paul—a gospel that cannot save sinners—I will do so in the spirit, not of hostility, but of love. I disclaim having any thing to glory in more than the guiltiest of mankind. Had it not been for the sovereign power of God, I might have been opposing the gospel as well as you. In the same sovereignty, you may yet repent to the acknowledgement of the truth.

There is a statement in this extract, which appears inconsistent with a former admission. You tell us, in a parenthesis, that "you are not aware that in this age or country, religion is ever visited with obloquy *as* such." I presume, you mean, religion as such. You had previously admitted that "the people of God are taught to expect persecution." Now, whence do these persecutions come? If in this age and country, the gospel of Paul is not an object of obloquy, how can Christians be taught to expect persecutions? Is it in heaven that they are to be persecuted? Your thoughts, Sir, are very crude. You have the cloak and staff of the philosopher, but you want his soul.

You give us a number of characteristics belonging to this system, as presumptions of unsoundness and delusion. It is "*the fashion.*" If you mean that it is generally adopted by the people of *fashion*, nothing can be more untrue. If you mean that it has of late been very generally received, this is no presumption of unsoundness and delusion. The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. Will this be a presumption of delusion? Your observation seems to be an admission, that Evangelical religion is on the increase. This is good news.

It is with you another suspicious thing, "when a peculiar set of views are seen to arrive at a sudden and violent growth." Do you forget the first progress of the gospel? You seem, however, to guard against this, by adding, "a set of views, not for the first time promulgated." But the fact that the progress of the gospel depends on God's *sovereign power*, strangles this sophistry. Were a nation born

to God in a day, there would be no presumption of unsoundness or delusion.

But this system has the misfortune, it seems, "not to profess to be the result of recent improvements in Scriptural criticism, or in Natural Theology, or Ethics." It would indeed be a presumption of unsoundness in any system, to profess to be the result of recent discovery in Scriptural criticism. The true system of doctrine, whatever it may be, must be contained in the most defective translation of the Scriptures, if it is honest. The discoveries of sound criticism will corroborate it, and crush the pretensions of its adversaries. What an absurdity, to speak of a system as owing its origin to improved criticism! I say this on the admission that the improvements in Scripture criticism, are fully equal to the boasts of a certain set of Theologians. This, however, I do not admit. I believe that an extensive acquaintance with the writings in the languages of the Scriptures, guided by a sound understanding, would make a better translation than any of these modern ones, that are made on the principles of boasted Scripture canons. Many real improvements of our translation, in particular passages, have undoubtedly been made. But by far a greater number of pretended improvements are gross corruptions, not founded on an interpretation according to the principles of language. Besides, it is in small matters they amend; in matters of the highest importance they pervert and corrupt. It is still a greater absurdity to speak of a system of the doctrine of Scripture, as the result of Natural Theology, or Ethics. Natural Theology, or Ethics, might, without absurdity, profess to overturn the Scriptures; but without the grossest absurdity, it cannot profess to interpret the language of Scripture. This, let the result be what it may, must be done on the principles of language itself.

"Their doctrines," you say, "derive their birth from a period when comparatively little light was sought or claimed from these sources." These doctrines, Sir, derive their birth from the Bible, and needed not the aid of criticism to bring them out. They are the obvious testimony of the Word of God, to all who are acquainted with the language in which they are written; and no honest translation can entirely exclude them. On every branch of our system, we dare the learning of our antagonists, and defy criticism to bring our colours from the mast. Every advance in sound criticism, will add to the evidence of the evangelical doctrines, and take away the foundation of their competitors.

Another presumption of unsoundness and delusion in these doctrines, you profess to find in the fact, that "during a long space, dis-

tinguished by some of the most illustrious names in divinity ever known in the world, they had become all but exploded." How long was truth exploded during the dark ages of Popery? How many of the best scholars and metaphysicians have been involved in the darkness of that system? The Scriptures provide an answer, "Not many wise."—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Another symptom of unsoundness and delusion in these doctrines, you make to consist in the supposed fact, that "in their present spread, they have made their progress not downwards from the enlightened and reflecting, but upwards." Let this be a fact, and it is quite in unison with the Word of God. It manifests, that it is not by human wisdom, and power, and influence, but from the working of God, that the truth prevails. The gospel, at first, came not from Jewish doctors, or Gentile philosophers, but from the Fishermen of Gallilee; and it made its progress also at first among the poor.

LETTER II.

Sir,

In announcing your plan, you tell us, that "it is not your purpose at present to test the peculiar doctrines of the Evangelical School, by their uniformity either with Scripture, or with particular ethical theories." To what tribunal, but that of Scripture, should their doctrines be brought, if the purpose is to know whether they are Scriptural? An infidel may consistently try them by another standard; but to all who profess that the Scriptures are the Word of God, the test of all doctrines claiming a foundation in Scripture, must be their conformity with Scripture. The abstract truth or falseness of those doctrines is not the question; but whether they are doctrines of Scripture. If they are found to be doctrines of Scripture, they must be received as truth by all who receive the Scrip-

tures. Were the Scriptures found to contain any doctrine self-evidently false, the conclusion would be, that the Scriptures are false, not that they do not contain such doctrines. You act like a lawyer, who, in ascertaining the meaning of a will, proceeds independently of the will.—"My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, I do not mean to inquire whether the claimant before you is named as heir in the will—I will content myself by shewing that he is a very unworthy man, and that many others have a better right to the inheritance." Opposite counsel, smiling contemptuously, replies, "My Lord, the merits of the different claimants is not the question; I have found that this is the true last-will and testament of a man in a sound state of mind, and one who had a full right to dispose of his property. My client is expressly named as his heir." It is strange that in religion, even the devotees of science and reason lose common sense. I object to your plan, Sir, as unphilosophical and absurd, Can it be ascertained whether certain doctrines are evangelical, by any other test than the Scriptures? If you say that the doctrines referred to are self-evidently false, renounce the Scriptures, and fight us as an infidel.

You speak of Ethical theories as a test of those doctrines, though you decline at present to employ it. Here again you do not act as a philosopher, more than as a Christian. Can any ethical theory prove that such doctrines are not in Scripture? Even allowing that Ethical theories have a right to be an umpire with respect to all religious doctrines, still, in ascertaining what is contained in Scripture, we must employ solely the principles of the interpretation of language. But Ethical theories, instead of being admitted to the high honour of deciding what is truth, are worthy of no more respect than a madman's dreams. They are not self-evident, and therefore can be of no avail against a revelation attested by sufficient evidence. In your views, Sir, I can perceive neither Scripture nor reason. The Neological principle, which accommodates the meaning of Scripture to philosophical views, is as absurd as it is wicked.

The doctrine of *human depravity* is the first thing in the system of your opponents, which you assail. You admit the thing in some sense, but charge the evangelical views on this point, as extravagant. "The evangelical divines," you say, "insist, that every thing whatever that man does, (at least in his natural state) is evil, and altogether evil; that he not only never seeks to do good, but that he is continually and wholly intent upon wickedness; that his every thought, and every act is wickedness, and only wickedness." Without correcting the exaggeration of this phraseology, I merely observe,

that the evangelical doctrine, is not that every thing done by a sinful man is in its own nature sinful; but that as the action of the sinner it is sinful. The thing itself may be duty. "Now, if these assertions," you say, "were mere figures of speech, we should not quarrel with them." Then I would differ from you here also. There could be no such figures of speech; and persons who, in the interpretation of Scripture, explain away the meaning of the Word of God, on the principle of figures of speech, shew that they are as ignorant of the nature of figurative language, as of the doctrines of the Bible. "But if they are literally meant," you say, "nothing else can possibly he said of them; but that they are utterly nonsensical." Here again I differ from you. Even if these doctrines are false, they are not nonsensical. Do you not know, Sir, that a thing may be untrue, without being nonsense? "Surely," you continue, "some, at least, of the thoughts and motives of men are directed to procure food, and clothes for themselves, and their children. Is there wickedness in this?" Here, Sir, you think you are strong; but it is ignorance of the doctrine of your opponents that gives you this confidence. To provide food and raiment, your opponents do not account sinful, but even those things as done by the sinner are sinful. Do not the Scriptures say, that the plowing of the wicked is sin? Plowing is a duty in itself, yet it is sinful as the action of the sinner. "Sometimes we are told," you say, "that every action is sinful that does not proceed exclusively from a regard to the Divine commands." It is not necessary that regard to the Divine commands should be the *exclusive* principle. The Scriptures address our hopes and fears, &c. but surely a regard to the command of God is necessary to obedience. This is self-evident.

"Again," you say, "we are told that we are blind to sin, until our eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit." Your opponents do not mean that men, in a state of nature, do not discern any thing to be sinful, but that they have not a sufficient view of the guilt of sin. You say, "If sin is not known to be sin, it is for that very reason (as a subject of responsibility at least) not sin." Why then were there so many offerings for the sin of ignorance under the Old Testament? Are you a better judge of sin than God? When God speaks, let men be silent, and receive his testimony with the most cheerful submission. What an arrogant creature is man? Who is he that dares to question what is taught by the Almighty? Was Paul innocent in persecuting the Christians? Yet he did it with a good conscience, "I verily thought," says he, "with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He counted him-

self the chief of sinners, on account of this conduct, yet he declares that he did it ignorantly. What regard is to be had to your speculations about sin, when the Word of God speaks so expressly to the contrary? It was wise in you not to attempt to test the doctrine of your adversaries by the Scriptures.

In a note, you observe, "In the declarations made with such peculiar zest and complacency by the evangelical party, on the depravity of human nature, we are apt to view them as merely indulging in feelings of deep humility, until it is recollected, that, of this depravity, they themselves (at least by their own account) have ceased to be partakers. The depravity, then, which they so ingenuously confess, is the depravity of all mankind except themselves." I suppose, Sir, you thought this very witty, as well as very severe. But it is sheer colouring. The evangelical party confess not only that they are involved in the universal guilt of human nature, but that even after they are born again, there is still a law in their members that warreth against the law of their mind. Each of them confesses with Paul, "In me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." You must be totally ignorant of the principles of those whom you oppose, else you would not speak thus. The sentiment which you here reprobate, is altogether *unevangelical.*

You speak with great contempt of "the silly creature impressed with the necessity of seeing his 'lost and perishing state by nature.'" But on whom does your ridicule fall? On God himself, who attests the fact as to the lost and perishing condition of all men by nature. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved.)" Who are you, Sir, that you will reply against God? With respect to the universal guilt of human nature, I will lay before you one statement of the Word of God, which, if you do not believe, neither would you believe if one should rise from the dead. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all

gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." I am well aware of the profane attempts of false criticism to give a turn to this passage, that will limit its application. But they are utterly vain, forced, and even childish. This passage answers all the questions which you put to your opponents. Whatever consequence you may dare to draw from it, this divine description of human nature makes all men "by nature the children of wrath."

LETTER III.

Sir,

You are next led to the subject of regeneration, and you ask:—"Is there any Christian preacher who fails to inculcate the necessity of repentance, and amendment, in every respect in which a man's life has not been in conformity with the Divine law, as that without which there can be no salvation—any preacher who holds out the hope of salvation to the man who wilfully continues in the practice of any sin, or the neglect of any duty—to the man who does not, in short, make the Law of God the paramount rule of his life? We do not think that any preacher requires *less* than this, as entitling any man to nourish the hope of salvation—we do not know that evangelical preachers can possibly require any thing more." This, Sir, is not a mode of reasoning that I should expect in a work that pretends to dictate to the philosophical world. You meet your antagonist on his view of regeneration; and you answer him by discussing its effects. Even were there an entire agreement between you and your opponents, on the points mentioned by you, still the subject of regeneration remains to be discussed. You tell us in a note, that you "do not here enter into the question, whether *regene-*

ration—conversion—being born again, even bears at all in Scripture, the evangelical meaning." But this is the very thing that must be first determined. Not one step can be advanced till this is settled. If you find fault with the doctrine of your opponents, on the subject of regeneration, you must state your view of the subject, and shew in what respects their doctrine is erroneous.

"In insisting, then," you say, "on the necessity of regeneration as an *effect*, there is no ground for the exclusive pretensions of the latter." What do you mean by regeneration as an *effect?* If your conclusion has any connexion with the observations on which it pretends to be founded, you must mean the effects of regeneration. But if this is your mind, you have very unhappily expressed it: for regeneration *as an effect*, and *the effects of regeneration*, are very different things.

Having so easily disposed of your antagonist, on the subject of regeneration itself, you then examine him as to the *manner* of regeneration. "Now," you say, "the impression which evangelical preachers constantly convey on this head, is to the effect, that every man must, at a particular assignable period of his life, have made a *change altogether* different, in kind, and degree, from any step in moral or spiritual improvement made either before or after; a change so great, that the part of his life immediately preceding it, as compared with that which immediately succeeds it, may, in the most literal and proper terms, be denominated a state of utter and desperate wickedness, recklessness, and blindness," &c. Here, again, I perceive imbecility, and confusion. Instead of speaking of the *manner* of regeneration, which you propose, you speak solely of its nature, and the time of its taking place. After this, Sir, what title have you to look with contempt on the most silly of "the silly creatures who are impressed with the necessity of seeing their lost and perishing state by nature?" The most fanatical ranter could not leave his subject more completely than you have done.

As to the manner of regeneration, your opponents say nothing, for they are taught of their Lord, that this is inexplicable.—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." As to the thing itself, it is a new spiritual life, as much the effect of God's immediate power, as is the life of the embryo in the womb of the parent. No man can serve God acceptably, without this new birth. Even Nicodemus, though he was a teacher in Israel, is taught that he must be born again: "Verily, Verily, I say unto thee," says Christ to Nicode-

mus, "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Believers are said to have been naturally dead in sin, and to be *quickened*, or made alive by God. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The effect of Divine power was not more real in raising Lazarus from the grave, than it is in giving spiritual life to every child of God. This cannot be expressed more strongly in human language, than it is in that of the Spirit of God. From this we will not recede a hair's breadth. We dare not modify the testimony of the Spirit of truth. If all the saints and angels in heaven, in concert with all the Christians on earth, were to attempt to produce this spiritual life in any individual, without the aid of the Spirit of God, they would utterly fail in the accomplishment. Even the word of the Saviour himself, when not accompanied with his Spirit, did not produce this life and light. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." So then, Sir, we are not afraid to state this truth, in terms even stronger than yours.

When you assert, however, that your opponents teach that the time of the communication of this new life is always *assignable*, you misrepresent them. That some persons may speak in this way, I admit; but it is not the doctrine of the evangelical system; and, as a matter of fact, I do not know an individual of them, of any denomination, who holds this. The new life may have been communicated so early, or so imperceptibly, that the moment of its commencement may not be ascertainable. The great matter with every individual is, not to be able to ascertain when he was made alive unto God, but that he is now actually alive.

You come next to treat of the *agency* in regeneration. "On this head," you say, "we have never known any Christian preacher who did not assiduously seek to impress his hearers with a sense of the deep and arduous nature of the Christian course, and of the difficulties, and dangers, and temptations, with which it is beset, carefully calling their attention, at the same time, to the promise of Divine assistance, which Scripture affords, and earnestly urging them to seek that assistance, as that which could alone enlighten, and strengthen, and purify them." Here, again, you leave your subject. You profess to treat of the *agency* in regeneration, and you speak of the arduous nature of the Christian course. Instead of speaking of the agency of God in producing new life, you speak of that agency in supporting this new life.

"All this, however," you say, "will not satisfy evangelical

preachers: for they never cease maintaining that man can do *nothing* for himself, and that regeneration is *altogether and entirely* the work of the Spirit. Every case in which a person contracts religious impressions, or enters upon a religious course of life, is spoken of as a plain evidence of Divine interposition, as shewing "the power of God." In the strongest terms that language can afford, we ascribe this new life entirely to God. But we do not teach that every case, in which a person contracts religious impressions, or enters upon a religious course of life, is an evidence of Divine interposition. There is much religion in the world, and many religious impressions, which are not of God.

"Such expressions as these," you say, "obviously mean that when one man has come into a state of salvation, another has not; this is not by the first person doing something which the other failed of doing, but by a supernatural intervention being made in behalf of the former, which was not made in behalf of the latter;—in other words, that a man's salvation has not been made to depend upon himself—has not been put into his own power." This is the doctrine of your opponents. This is the doctrine of the Word of God. "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God. God forbid! For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Here, Sir, is a statement as strong as it is possible for language to express. Is this less offensive to you than the language of those who receive it as the declaration of God? The apostle proceeds to a still more offensive doctrine. "For the Scripture saith to Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" Mark, Sir, the only answer that the apostle deigns to give to such objections as yours.—"Nay, but, oh man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" This will for ever answer all the quibbling sophistry of those who attempt to hold the Scriptures, and deny the evangelical doctrines. I know that the whole ingenuity of man has been employed to give a turn

to this phraseology that may put it aside from its object. But till heaven and earth pass away, the attempt will be fruitless. The sagacity of Satan could not pervert these words with plausibility.

But if this is the meaning of your opponent, you ask what is the object of the hortatory parts of evangelical discourses? It is a sufficient reply to this, that the same God who testifies of man's inability, has commanded that all men should be called to believe the Gospel. We are not bound to satisfy any man who professes faith in the Scriptures, as to the manner of the consistency of these things. If we prove that they are both from God, they must be consistent, though we should not be able to prove their consistency. Calls to faith and repentance, are the means by which God brings his people to the knowledge of himself—means, however, that will never be successful but through his own infinite power.

You ask, "What kind of sense is this, to urge a man to do something, and tell him in the same breath he can do nothing?" Do not the Scriptures call on all men to believe? Do they not say that faith is the gift of God? I will exemplify to you, from the conduct of Jesus himself, the consistency of this apparent inconsistency. "Jesus said to the man with the withered hand; Stretch forth thine hand." Was the man able to stretch forth his hand? was he able to move it, more than he was able to move the mountains, or bring down the sun from the firmament? Yet he stretched forth his hand in a moment; with the command, Jesus communicated the power to obey. So with the calls to faith; men are dead in sin, but God gives life, and faith, through his Word, by his Spirit. Had the man with the withered arm adopted your plan, he would have petulantly replied to Jesus, "why do you mock? why do you call on me to do, what you know I am not able to do?" This might have been very clever; but it would have ruined both body and soul. Had you been at the tomb of Lazarus when Christ raised him from the dead, you would have had a very appropriate subject for your ridicule; and, doubtless, you would have been very witty. *Lazarus come forth*, said the Saviour, with a loud voice. "*Lazarus come forth*," cries the mocker, "you might as well call upon the rocks to live. Have you not been told that the man is four days in the grave? Why do you call upon a dead man to live?" Yet the Word of the Lord was not in vain. Jesus spoke the world into existence, and by the power of the same word, Lazarus heard, and lived, and came forth. In these facts, Sir, we will for ever have an answer to all the quibbles of sophistry, with respect to calling on dead sinners to believe.

"But, say the evangelical preachers," you observe, "we do not recognise man's own power to do what we urge; and our persuasions, or threats, are merely the means by which the influence of the Holy Spirit is to be conveyed to him. Well; but how do these things operate? Is their use commanded, without any reference to their adaptation to the end?" We are not bound to shew how these means operate. It is sufficient, that he, who can effect the end, has commanded the means. There is, *no* doubt, an adaptation to the end, in all the means appointed by God; but the means have no fitness to do the thing without God's immediate power. Was it the virtue of the word, or the power of the speaker, that produced creation? "Can they operate otherwise," you say, "than through man's sense of being able to make a choice—able to make some effort or exertion?"—They do not operate through any such conviction.—In faith this is never thought of.—Was the man with the withered hand restored to soundness, by a consciousness of being able to make some effort? Was Lazarus brought to life, by a conviction that he had the power to make a choice of continuing in death, or of coming to life? Your metaphysics are as bad as your theology.

"Supposing the means not to succeed," you say, "would it be admitted to be quite rational and allowable for a man to say—the Holy Spirit has not yet moved me—I must be damned in consequence, I cannot help it?" To this it is sufficient to reply, that while faith is said to be the gift of God, unbelief is declared to be not only a sin, but the greatest of all sins. We are not bound to show the consistency of the metaphysics of this question. We reply, with the apostle on the subject:—"Nay, but, Oh man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Unbelief is a man's sin, although faith is the gift of God.

"Or, on the other hand," you say, "supposing the means to succeed, the persuasion or threats to take effect, in that case, will the man have done nothing? Will he have remained purely passive?" Faith is the gift of God, yet, faith is the act of the human mind. You may as well ask, when a man sees with his eyes, has he done nothing?

"If it is said," you observe, "the choice, though apparently a man's own act, is really not his own, but the work of the Spirit in him; we answer, it may be so: It may be that we are not the same men we were yesterday; that our recollection of the past, and our perceptions of the present, are altogether fallacious; but this, we shall say, that if there be any one thing that we are sure of, it is, that our volitions, or acts of choice, are our own, and not those of

another being, and that we are wholly responsible for them." No doubt, Sir, you think you are very strong here. You think you have entrenched yourself behind self-evident truth. But your confidence arises solely from your want of discrimination, and your ignorance of the doctrine of your adversaries. They do not say that a man's choice and volitions are not his own, and that they are the choice and volitions of another being. But they say, that a man will not choose or will what is good, without the Spirit of God enabling him. They do not call our volitions God's volitions: they teach that God enables us to will. In all such quibbling, it is sufficient to reply with an apostle, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Can any thing more expressly declare that we are not able to will good more than to do good of ourselves? "If we are conscious of the power of choice," you say, "the Spirit acts, or does not act, just as we choose to act in this or that way; so that, still, our situation, in every practical meaning, would rest with ourselves." Does not this say, that the dead man is continued in death, or brought to life, just as he may choose life or death? But the Word of God meets all such objections. The passage already quoted, assures us that God worketh in us both to will and to do, not according as we perversely choose, but according to his own *good pleasure.* Another apostle assures us, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." *Of his own will*—not of *our own choice.* Believers "are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In every respect, then, this new birth is of God. Indeed, it is absurd and ridiculous to speak of a birth, in which the person born in any respect co-operates. You speak of absurdity in the system of your opponents, but your own system is palpably absurd. It makes the child its own parent.

"If a man can do nothing to save himself," you say, "he is damned for not doing what he cannot do. Is this consistent with the divine justice?" Is not this the very objection anticipated by the Apostle Paul, and which he answers, not by shewing the metaphysics of the question, but merely by denying the consequence? "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." The depths of the divine councils are not to be fathomed by us. What he asserts must be true, and, at the same time, however unaccountable it may appear to us, it is perfectly just. God must be believed on his own authority; not on the grounds of our ability to justify him.

"To evade this consideration," you say, "we shall be presented with fine spun distinctions, between a natural, and a moral inability."

This distinction I believe to be sound and satisfactory. Yet there is no necessity to employ it in order to repel such conclusions as yours. It is quite enough that God testifies both that men by nature are dead in sin, and that they are guilty on account of unbelief. Both must be true, in whatever way they may be consistent. The obvious ground of harmony is, that different kinds of inability are spoken of. But, independently of understanding this, both truths must be received on the testimony of God. In replying to such men as you, I will enter into no metaphysical solution of difficulties. I will shew you that God testifies that all men are dead in sin, and that faith is the gift of God, while I will contend as strenuously as you can do, that men's sins are their own, and justly render them liable to the wrath of God. I believe God, and receive the kingdom of God as a little child.

"What," you ask, "is the specific case of fault or error which is conceived to require such frequent and urgent assertions of this doctrine?" What other justification is necessary to bring any doctrine forward, than that God has taught it? Is it not a sufficient reason to urge it continually, that it meets us so frequently in the Word of God? Must not men be told their true state before God? Is a truth not the more earnestly to be pressed, when it is so hotly and violently assailed by men who know not the Gospel?

You ask, "Whether it is for the credit of Christianity, as a system fitted for the acceptance of a rational being—whether it is consistent with the supposition of man's being a rational being, to say, on the one hand, that revelation has not sufficient evidence to procure his belief, does not present considerations sufficient to move his conduct; or, on the other, that he is incapable of being moved by such evidence and such considerations, without a supernatural interference?" Does the credit of Christianity require it to do what it does not profess to do? What it asserts God only can do? It is, indeed, worthy of all acceptance; yet it teaches us that none will accept it without the power of God. Is it any discredit to a truth, that men are so blinded by hatred to it, that they will not receive it till God opens their hearts? But speculations on this subject are useless and vain. It is a matter of Divine testimony, and on this ground only, will I rest its defence. If I prove that this doctrine is the testimony of God, I will give your speculations to the wind. Man is a rational being, but almost every thing in his conduct is most irrational. It is not possible to defend the honour of ra-

tionality in man, even if the Scriptures had never been published.

"What," you ask, "shall we say of the complete sacrifice of all worldly ease and pleasure, of the dreadful privations and tortures often incurred by the Hindoo, with a view to secure his welfare in a future world? Yet, we believe, supernatural interference will not be pleaded in such an instance as this?" What shall we say? This fact has no difficulty—no application to the point in hand. We say, that the Hindoo does what a man dead in sin may do. Nay, we say, that this conduct is a proof of his spiritual death. We say, also, that a man under the name of a Christian, may give his body to be burned, as well as his goods to feed the poor, without being spiritually alive. This objection shews the deepest ignorance of the subject. Does the conduct of the Hindoo please God, or show him to be in the lowest degree spiritually alive? If not, how can the example bear on the subject? This, Sir, is not reasoning, more than it is Christianity.

"Is the Christian's belief, then," you ask, "formed on less sure grounds? Is the conduct required of him less rational, less practical? Is the Christian himself less rational, less sensible of the wisdom of sacrificing all worldly good for the sake of his everlasting happiness?" Here you give us an example of your usual confusion of ideas. The point in hand concerns the natural man—the unbeliever—the man dead in sin. Here you pass to the Christian, as now made alive by the Spirit of God. Your questions take it for granted, that your opponents hold that there are some works in their nature so difficult, as not to be performed by men in their own strength. To disprove this, you shew us what we must admit the Hindoo does in his own strength. We crush your objection, by admitting that all this and more may be done by men spiritually dead. You take it for granted that the Hindoo makes himself spiritually alive by the works referred to. If not, it is nothing to your purpose. Is there any accuracy of thinking in this reasoning?

In a note, you observe, "If it is not alleged that, in such cases, the Divine interference is manifest to our perceptions, or that the effect is inexplicable from known motives on the human mind, the fact of such interference must be rested on the authority of Scripture. But what shall we say when these very instances, as they are termed, of Divine power, are produced as proofs of the truth of Scripture, *i. e.* the miracle first proved by Scripture, then Scripture by the miracle!" Here you think you have completely entrapped

your antagonist. You triumph over him as reasoning in a circle. But, Sir, in a moment I will shew that all the wonder of your mark of admiration ought to be directed against your own ignorance. I will deliver your opponents out of this magic circle. When I reason with a man who denies regeneration, while he admits the Scriptures to be the Word of God, I will prove regeneration solely from the Scriptures. When I reason with an infidel, I appeal, as a subordinate argument, to the undeniable fact, that by the belief of the Gospel, millions of the most abandoned characters have been changed in views and conduct in a manner which philosophy never effected—never professed. This I consider a most solid argument. But, whatever you may think of it, it is not reasoning in a circle. It is nothing akin to the process by which men prove the Scriptures by the church, and the church by the Scriptures.

"But, waiving this," you say, "Scriptural usage in one sense, ascribes *every thing* to God, in respect that every faculty we possess is given by him, and cannot be exercised independently of him; in another more particular sense, it ascribes to him all the effects produced by the promises and threatenings contained in revelation." This is mere assertion, and I meet it by asserting, that there is no such Scriptural usage.

"But, let them define what they mean by a saving faith," you say, "and then tell us whether as great a devotion to religious duty in a Christian, as a Hindoo or a Mahometan sometimes exhibits, would not be a saving faith?" What an absurdity! *Devotion to religious duty* is not faith of any kind. This is the grossest abuse of language.

I overlook the philosophy of your account of the favour which evangelical doctrines enjoy among the weak and ignorant. If we can prove that these are the doctrines of Scripture, the *strong* and the *wise* will be damned if they reject them. I will not take time to expose your error in supposing, that if the influences of the Spirit are sensibly felt, they are *distinguishable* from the operations of the mind that feels them. It is in the operations of the mind that the influences of the Spirit are felt. But I cannot forbear tasting a delicious morsel of philosophy in the following quotation:—"The idea of man's being wholly passive in the work of spiritual improvement—the mere subject of a change impressed upon him by a power external to himself—seems to be fast producing the persuasion, that if any thing can be done for salvation at all, it can only be done by the use of what are called religious ordinances." So, then, the idea that nothing can be done, is fast producing the idea that something in a

particular way can be done! But the evangelicals are so weak and ignorant, that they cannot penetrate to the bottom of this sage philosophy.

You speak contemptuously of religious ordinances, and then endeavour to save yourself, by observing, that you are opposed merely to the disproportionate zeal for them. "Prayer-meetings abound, preachings are thronged, preachers run after, observance of the Sabbath, punctual attendance on public worship, are the most common, and treated as the most important subject of inculcation." Such language appears to undervalue the things mentioned, and not merely to censure undue importance as given to them. Though Christians ought not to substitute any ordinance for the gospel itself, yet too much zeal cannot be manifested for the Sabbath, and the ordinances of worship.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

THE question of faith and works is the next subject of your discussion. "Here," you say, "we are prepared to maintain, in spite of all the efforts of evangelical preachers, to make the contrary appear, that some of their most common representations must have the effect (if they have any effect at all), of relieving men from the duties of morality, of making morality utterly useless as regards salvation, and, of course, of removing all motives to the practice of moral virtue that may be drawn from that source.—Every body knows," you continue, "that no topic is a more constant and favourite one with the evangelical preachers, than the inefficacy of *works*, as means of obtaining salvation;—nothing the object of more frequent denunciation than the placing of any dependance on our works, or the using of any attempts, or entertaining any hopes, to procure salvation in this way; nor do they ever omit to reprobate, as an error of the most fatal kind, the idea that our works can, even in part, and together with the atonement of Christ, contribute to the procuring of our salvation. Will any man who is acquainted with the meaning of language, say, that from representations of this kind, it is not the first and most natural inference, that we cannot benefit ourselves by practising moral virtue;—that we need not, therefore,

seek to practise it; that the practice of moral virtue is useless? For, if good works do not contribute to our salvation, what motive is there (founded on a regard to our salvation) for the performance of them?"

No doubt you think that your reasoning here is perfect demonstration, or rather self-evident truth. But I will prove, in a few words, that your speculations, instead of being the brightness of truth, are not only in direct opposition to Scripture, but that they manifest a want of the perspicuity of a philosopher. You do not distinguish where there is an essential difference. You say "the first and most natural inference is, that we cannot benefit ourselves by practising moral virtue." If you mean that moral virtue cannot have the smallest effect in our justification, this is not an inference from the above language. It is the direct assertion. How absurd to speak of an inference in this sense! But this is not your meaning, your inference is not sound.—Good works may be very useful in several respects, nay, they may be absolutely necessary, though they are utterly useless for justification. You must either be deficient in powers of discrimination, or you must be so blinded by hostility to the doctrine which you oppose, that you cannot coolly examine it. Has an heir no motive to love a kind father, though the estate descends to him by entail, and not by will? "We love God, because he first loved us." If we believe that when we were dead in sin Christ died for us, have we no motive to do his will? Though good works have nothing to do in our justification, yet we are told, without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Is there then no motive to holiness? We learn from Scripture, that believers, though justified entirely by faith in the blood of Christ, will be rewarded in proportion to their works. Is there, then, no motive to perform good works? But, Sir, though your speculations were so subtle as to perplex my philosophy, I would, with unabated confidence, rest all upon God's testimony. The word of Him who cannot lie, assures us that works cannot justify, and the same word assures us, that those works "are good and profitable unto men." Who is he who thus dares to reply against God? "Now," in regard to this statement," you say, "we in the first place, not merely deny that faith will produce good works, flattering the idea, or definition of a saving faith (which evangelical divines themselves furnish), but assert the very contrary." After the express declarations of God in the Scriptures, such language is truly surprising. This gives God the lie in the most audacious manner. Well, let us hear how the assertion is supported. After telling us in what the perfection of faith consists,

you ask, "will a belief that our works can in no degree or way contribute to our salvation, produce works? will it not produce, if it produce any thing at all, the very reverse?" Here, again, I discover either a want of perspicuity, or a want of honesty. You represent faith to consist in believing that works can in no degree contribute to our salvation. But this is not the faith that saves the sinner. The faith that saves us includes indeed the idea that works cannot contribute to our justification; but it consists in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is possible that a man might believe that works cannot save, and yet not have the faith of the gospel. You err, then, Sir, in representing as saving faith, that which is only an idea pre-supposed in it; and which may subsist without it. Before you can prove, that instead of producing good works faith will produce the very reverse, you are obliged to misrepresent it. That faith which will produce bad works, is not the belief that we are justified by the blood of Jesus, but a faith *that believes that good works are in every respect useless.* Such a faith would, indeed, produce bad works; but such is not the faith of the gospel.

"The fact is," you say, "that the evangelical professors here unconsciously borrow a leaf out of the ordinary system. That faith will, according to its degree, produce good works, is a true proposition, where faith means a belief not merely in Christ as our Saviour, but a belief in all that Christ has told us,—one of these things being, that we shall be saved if we practise good works according to his commands, not saved otherwise." Not a leaf, not a letter, is borrowed from your system. It is true that faith in every Divine declaration will produce corresponding effects; but the faith of the Gospel itself produces good works. Can a man believe that Jesus died to save him, while he could do nothing to save himself; and shall he not love and obey him who died for him?

"But the proposition that faith will necessarily produce good works," you say, "in the evangelical idea of faith, *i. e.* faith involving the belief that our works can in no degree help to procure salvation for us, is an absurdity but just one step removed from a contradiction in terms." Instead of being a contradiction in terms, I maintain that there is not the smallest inconsistency in this doctrine. Is it a contradiction in terms to assert that a malefactor pardoned by his Majesty, may afterwards love and serve his sovereign, though his love and service cannot possibly have any influence on the pardon? You do not reason as a philosopher, more than as a Christian. "Instead of proving," you say, "that we wholly and entirely trusted in Christ, our performance of works should prove just the contrary."

So, then, if the pardoned criminal loves and serves his sovereign, he proves that he does not believe that pardon was owing to mercy, but to his own deserts! May there not be other motives for performing good works, though they should not have any share in our justification? Surely a sound mind might see this distinction.

"Surely," you say, "the obvious and natural way of proving that we trust altogether to Christ, and not at all to our works, is not to perform these works." Can it be a natural way to prove, that we trust altogether in Christ for our justification, and not in works, to neglect the thing that Christ has commanded? While works are not performed for justification, they are necessary for other purposes.

In a note, you observe, "This is the exact counterpart of St Paul's reasoning, (Gal. v. 2—6.) He urges on the Jewish converts, if they will resort to circumcision, and the other rites of the ceremonial law, Christ's sacrifice can profit them nothing; because this would indicate a want of reliance on that sacrifice. From which we draw this inference, and beg the earnest attention of evangelical divines to it—that if, in these texts where St Paul speaks of faith as the exclusive means of salvation, as opposed to works, he had spoken with a view to *moral* works, he would have prohibited these works on the same ground as he prohibited circumcision. Did St Paul prohibit moral works?" Here you think you have your opponents in a net; but I can shew you in a moment that your reasoning is sophistry, and that its apparent strength lies in a want of discrimination. I observe, in the first place, that the works excluded by Paul from having a share in salvation, are not merely ceremonial rites, but all works of the law, moral as well as ritual. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Is not this the whole law, moral as well as ceremonial? "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith." Is this the ceremonial part of the law only? Could this assertion be made, if men are justified by the moral part of the law? It absolutely excludes from salvation all who trust in the law in every view of it. "And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them." Is not this the whole law? "Is the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Does not this exclude works of the moral part of the law, as well as of the ceremonial? "Tell me, ye

that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" This shews that they desire to be under the law as a whole. The attempt, then, to prove that it is ceremonial, and not moral works which the apostle excludes from having any share in justification, is as silly as it is wicked.

Now, let us take a look at your inference. You say, that if Paul had excluded moral works as well as ceremonial works from justifying, he would have prohibited both. I maintain, on the contrary, that he might expressly exclude both from justification, while he might have prohibited the one, and enjoined the other. Moral works are good in their own nature; ceremonial works are good only as the appointment of God. The one then cannot be prohibited, the other may be prohibited, while the former has no more concern in justification than the latter. This, Sir, is my philosophy; shew me where it is wrong. But there is another mistake in your view of this matter. Paul equally prohibits moral and ceremonial works in the matter of justification. But he did not prohibit circumcision to the Jews at that time. They might practise it, but not for salvation; Paul circumcised Timothy.

"But, in the next place," you say, "supposing that faith necessarily did produce good works—so that, where no good works appeared, there could be no faith—still, if works, as works, were not means of salvation, there could be no motives for the performance of them." What! if works cannot be useful for one purpose, can they not be useful for another? If works are not means of justification, they are not to be performed for justification; but if they are necessary for other purposes, they must be performed for those other purposes. The most silly of "the silly creatures, who see their lost and ruined condition by nature," can discern this.

"If the faith is not there," you say, "the performance of works will not make it to be so, and therefore cannot mend the matter." Very true.—But what has this to do with the question at issue? though it is contended that faith will always produce good works, yet it is not contended that works will at any time produce faith. We do not say that a man should eat and drink in order to create an appetite, but that a man, who has an appetite, will eat and drink.

"But now," you say, "leaving all these objections to the manner in which evangelical divines rebut the charge of making good works, or moral virtue, unnecessary to salvation.—Since they acknowledge, in point of fact, however inconsistently, that good works cannot be dispensed with, what, we desire to know, becomes of their assertion, so often, so absolutely insisted upon, that we are saved by faith

alone, without good works,—and that all that is necessary for us is to believe in Christ? To say to a man you are saved by faith without works, but you must give the works too, or else you cannot be reckoned to have the faith—what is this but a pitiful sophism?" There is no sophism in the doctrine of your opponents on this point, the inconsistency is all in your own apprehension. When it is said that a man is saved by faith, without works, the meaning is, that he is justified by faith without works. When it is said that works are necessary, it is not meant that they are necessary for justification, but as the fruits of faith. Paul asserted, that of all the ship's company there should not one lose his life; yet he afterwards declared, that unless the sailors should abide in the ship, salvation was impossible, (Acts xxvii. 22, 31.)

You observe in a note on this passage, "We have now and then heard evangelical discourses constructed on this plan:—in the *first* head, the preacher would maintain, in the most express and unequivocal terms that we are saved by faith alone, without works: the *second*, he would commence by asking, Do I then say we can be saved without works?—absurd, ridiculous, a vile calumny, and what not:—never seeming to observe that the supposition thus indignantly disclaimed in the *second* head, is, to the letter, the very proposition maintained in the first." Though this appears to you directly contradictory, I will shew you that it is, when rightly understood, perfectly consistent. Salvation sometimes applies to justification, and sometimes to admission into heaven. When it is said that salvation is by faith alone without works, the meaning is, that we are justified before God without works; but when it is asserted that a man cannot be saved without works, the meaning is, not that he cannot be justified without works, but that he cannot enter heaven without works. Works are as necessary in their own place, as faith is in its own place. What inconsistency is in this? "Does God Almighty," you ask, "thus trifle with the understanding of his creatures? and is revelation really a thing of riddles and conundrums for men to exercise their wits withal?" God Almighty does not trifle with the understanding of his creatures, but his creatures often misuse their understanding in perverting his word, when it opposes their own views and wishes. Revelation is not a thing of riddles, but many, from their own blindness, find inconsistency in its most consistent doctrines. "If our Gospel be hid," says Paul, "it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them."

The doctrine you oppose is as clearly the doctrine of God, as the heaven and the earth are his work. It is only by the most daring and obstinate perverseness that you can misrepresent it. Consider then, Sir, that as God will not trifle with the understanding of his creatures, neither will he allow his creatures to trifle with him. If this is the Word of God, what is the guilt of the man who, on that supposition, charges God with trifling with the understanding of his creatures? Jeremiah predicted that Zedekiah, king of Judah, should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon: Ezekiel predicted that Zedekiah should not see the land of the Chaldeans. Josephus informs us, that Zedekiah considered these two prophecies as contradictory, and therefore disbelieved both. But, in due time, he found that both were true. Sir, the day will come, when you shall see that all the Divine declarations are consistent with one another. There will be a time when the doctrine of faith and works will not appear a juggle.

In a note to the last extract, you say, "Here we cannot help alluding to the manner in which evangelical preachers manage to get over the numerous plain declarations of Scripture, that we shall be judged according to our *actions*." Is not this flagrant calumny? Do your opponents deny that men shall be judged according to their works? Have they any need to get over the passages to which you refer? Is not the doctrine of these passages a part, an essential part, of their system?

"If a text says," you continue, "that a man who obeys the Divine laws, will be rewarded with future happiness—yes, they say, if he does keep the Divine laws *to the letter*." Well, and what is this to the subject on which you bring it to bear? Does this imply that men shall not be judged according to their works? It says only, that there are no men who keep the law. As to the question whether a man is entitled to the reward of keeping a law, who does not keep it fully, the negative is self-evidently the proper answer. Can a man be entitled to the reward of keeping a law, who in any degree breaks the law? To a certain person who wished to have eternal life, by doing some good thing, Christ says, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Are the commandments kept when any of them is broken? Is not this a contradiction in terms? And does not an apostle tell us, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all?" How, then, can men have a reward by the keeping of the law?

But, you add, "As if God would mock his creatures with promises of his reward, which he knew they could never—without his

merciful allowance—act so as to obtain." Is it mockery to tell a man who wishes to be saved by doing good, what is the good that he must, according to that way of salvation, perform? And is not this the most effectual way to convince him that salvation in that way is impossible? But view the matter as you will, mockery or truth, this is the necessary import of the expression. *To keep the law, is not to break the law.* The keeping of the commandments, insisted on by Christ, cannot admit in any point the breach of them. If they are broken, in any instance, they cannot be said to be kept. It requires no great depth of intellect to understand this *truism.* But you speak of a *merciful allowance.* You have called the evangelical doctrines nonsensical, where I have shewn them to be consistent. But, I maintain, that it is *sheer nonsense* to speak of salvation by the keeping of a law, while there is a merciful allowance for breaking that law. Does this keep the commandments? Such an observation is as disgraceful to intellect as it is opposed to Scripture. Let it be allowed, for the sake of argument, that God will make allowances for the breach of his law, then salvation is not by the keeping of the commandments. This way of salvation is neither law nor gospel. It is mere absurdity.

"So also they say," you remark, "that, by the good works to which reward is promised, we must understand merely the righteousness of Christ, imputed to the *believer.*" This is not a correct statement. Believers are justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, or reckoned as their own, because they are one with Christ by faith. In Christ they are every thing that the law requires in them, in order to escape its curse. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." But the works that shall be rewarded in believers, are the works which they have in their own persons wrought, through faith in Christ. They are *their* works, yet they are works which Christ works in them. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." "It is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

"Thus," you say, "a text declaring that our salvation depends on our works, is made to declare that it does *not* depend on our works, but on our faith." This is another misstatement. If there are any fanatics who speak thus, they must not be confounded with those who have a title to the character of evangelical preachers. The texts, the innumerable texts, that require good works in be-

lievers, are not explained as if they meant that faith is required. Both classes of passages are allowed their own meaning, and insisted on with equal zeal. Both faith and works are necessary in the heirs of salvation; but they are necessary for a different purpose. While it is declared that he that believeth not shall be damned, it is declared with equal correctness, that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. The inconsistency which you discover in the system of your opponents, is not in their doctrine, but in your own misrepresentation. "The great body of Protestants," you say, "maintain that all men are sinners, and liable to punishment; and that no man can, by any works, moral or ceremonial, make atonement for his sin: in this sense, they maintain that works cannot contribute to their salvation." But, Sir, not only are works unable to make atonement; they are equally unavailing as a medium of connection with the atonement. It is by faith, and not by works, that men are justified, through the atonement. Your doctrine here is as faulty as it is every where else; though you falsely represent it as the doctrine of the generality of Protestants. Besides, Sir, if "all men are sinners, and liable to punishment," can they be rewarded for keeping the commandments? Are they to be both rewarded and punished? But you may say, that the atonement blunts the edge of the law. Then, Sir, salvation is not by the keeping of the law, but partly by the law, and partly by the atonement. How then could Christ say, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments?"

"It is never in any other meaning than this," you say, "that the New Testament writers represent salvation as attainable without works." The New Testament writers exclude works, as well from being the medium of connecting sinners with the atonement, as they exclude them from making atonement. It is as a medium of connection with Christ, and not as an atonement, that faith is commanded. It is on this point only that faith and works are contrasted. Indeed, it is self-evident, that neither faith nor works can make atonement. Though we could keep the whole law at present, this would not make atonement for former breaches of the law.

"And, though their proposition (in this meaning) holds equally true," you add, "both as to moral and ceremonial works, it was in respect of the latter *solely*, that the occasion for maintaining the proposition existed." Were this true, it is nothing to the purpose. No matter what gave occasion to the statement of the proposition, if the proposition includes moral works as well as ceremonial. But your statement is not true. Even the error of the Galatian churches was not confined to circumcision as a rite unconnected with law, but

as a part of the law; and though circumcision was particularly the object of their zeal, yet they evidently joined with it the whole law. The Apostle's reasoning supposes this. This is every where obvious from the epistle, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ,—for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "This only would I learn of you: received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" "For as many as are under the works of the law are under the curse." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith." "And the law is not of faith." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Does not the term *law* here refer to the whole law of Moses? "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Circumcision then, while it was the great, was not the only point in which they were attached to the law.

"There is not, we believe," you add, "*one* text to be found, to the effect that faith alone, without works, can procure salvation, which has not, by the context, *a direct and visible* reference to the case mentioned in Acts xv. 1." This is not so. When Paul directly treats on the subject of justification in the Epistle to the Romans, he speaks of the law without any reference to circumcision. "Therefore," says he, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Is the knowledge of sin by circumcision? "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested." Does the law here mean circumcision only? "Where is boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Is circumcision the only thing that could afford a ground of boasting? Sir, your observation is not only unfounded, but there is no plausible occasion to suggest it. When works are excluded from justification, the whole law of God is referred to, and moral works are as directly excluded as ceremonial. This perversion of the Word of God, by which some have endeavoured to set aside the Apostle's doctrine, is without any colour of plausibility.

"Preaching," you say "against seeking salvation by works *now*, in the way that St Paul found it necessary to preach it, is among the greatest absurdities that ever entered the human brain." I have shewn you that the Apostle Paul preaches against works as a ground of justification, as directly with respect to moral works, as with re-

spect to ceremonial. But were it otherwise, your doctrine here is false. Though the occasion of preaching against works as a ground of salvation, had invariably been the reliance of the Jews on circumcision, still, as the Apostle puts down reliance on circumcision, by reasoning that will equally apply to every work of the law, it would be quite proper to make this application of his doctrine to every case in which works of any kind are relied on for justification. The individual case referred too, might respect a work of the ceremonial law, but the principle on which it is condemned, refers to the whole law. If prejudice does not here blind you, I cannot compliment your understanding, on account of this observation. In overturning circumcision as a ground of justification, the Apostle shews in general, that works of law cannot justify; yet your perspicuity allows you to assert, that to include works of moral law is an absurdity. Silliness, I see, is not the exclusive characteristic of the Evangelicals.

You ask, "Why do not evangelical preachers take some pains to put down the worship of Baal?" Now, I cannot see the appropriateness of this example. To make it appropriate, you must suppose that the evangelical preachers are now preaching against justification by circumcision, though there is no one who holds it. And then ask, "As they do this, why do they not also preach against the worship of Baal, although there is now no man who worships him?" But the evangelical preachers are using the apostle's doctrine against circumcision, just as they might use the condemnation of the worship of Baal. The worship of Baal is forbidden, on grounds that exclude from worship every thing but God; and, on this authority, they might preach against the Baalism of Popery, and every other species of idolatry. I may bring this example to refute yourself. If an apostle, in reprobating the worship of Jupiter, or any other of the heathen gods, would ground his doctrine on the truth, that there is no proper object of worship but the One God, who made heaven and earth, would it not be proper on this ground to exclude from worship every thing that in modern times is worshipped? Now, this is the very thing that the apostle has done. He opposes circumcision on grounds that respect works of law of every kind. Moral works are as expressly included in his reasoning, as even the works of the ceremonial part of the law.

"As forgiveness of the past," you say, "does not imply a dispensation for the future, and as a pardon for the past would be a nullity when the transgression was not abandoned, and where fresh

guilt was to be incurred, it is also held that there can be no pardon without repentance and amendment." Now, while I hold the necessity of works in their proper place, as strongly as you can do, yet I have an objection to this phraseology. It makes atonement respect sins antecedent to repentance and amendment only, and justifies the after part of the life, either by perfect conformity to law, or leaves him to punishment for every breach. Now, the Scriptures represent the influence of the atonement as extending to the whole life.—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Dares your penitent amended man incur no fresh guilt? If he does, this doctrine of yours does not provide for it. It must be provided for by some "merciful allowance."

Having so satisfactorily reconciled the contesting claims of faith and works, you triumphantly ask, "In what does the statement now given fall short of, being evangelical, or wherein consists that 'trusting to works,'—that 'self-righteousness,'—that 'pride of the human heart,'—which evangelical professors never cease inveighing against as damnable errors, into which all but themselves have fallen?" I fancy, Sir, I have shewn you a trifling difference between your system and that of your adversaries on this subject. That difference, every unprejudiced mind must see to be an essential and a wide one.

"The 'self-righteousness' which we find the most severely condemned in Scripture," you tell us in a note, "is that of the persons who trusted that they were righteous, and *despised others*. Whether the evangelical party are distinguished by an extraordinary exemption from this fault, we shall not pretend to say." This insinuation is most injurious and unjust. Every one who truly receives the evangelical doctrines, glories only in the righteousness of Christ. Instead of *despising others* no less righteous than he is himself by nature, he receives salvation on the same ground as the thief on the cross.

You censure your opponents, in a subsequent paragraph, for distinguishing between outward act and motive, as if no one, in viewing actions, fails in including the exercise of a moral and religious principle. But, Sir, the glory of God is a motive essential in every good action.—"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink," says the apostle, "or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Every thing, then, must be done to the glory of God, and whatever is not done to the glory of God, is sin, is a breach of this Divine law.

"On the other hand," you say, "if evangelical teachers include, in their idea of faith, the principle of moral virtue, a regard to moral

believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." *Every creature—every creature!* Then, Sir, the absurdity in this matter rests with yourself, and not with the evangelical preachers. But how childish is your proof that every one of such congregations must be a Christian because he goes to hear preaching? Were all the multitudes who heard Christ disciples? The claims even of many who favoured him, were rejected by him.

I have no language sufficient to express my abhorrence of a sentiment expressed in the following quotation:—"The abstrusest portions in Hebrews, Romans, Galatians,—all relating to temporary and local subjects of discussion, and which, to the great majority of a congregation, cannot convey the shadow of an idea,—appear to receive a marked preference, &c." Is this language to be employed about any part of that book, of every part of which, we are assured by the Spirit of God, that it is profitable? Who are you, Sir, that you take upon you to blaspheme the Scriptures?

"The fatal defect of the evangelical system, when representing salvation as obtained by faith alone, obviously lies," you tell us, "in the narrow signification they so unreasonably attach to the term faith or belief; making it to denote certain mystical and undefined feelings in regard to the atonement only, (notions, by the way, for which Scripture does not afford the shadow of a warrant), instead of a general persuasion of the reality of Christ's authority, and consequent reception of his instructions, and submission to his commands." Faith, Sir, your opponents do not make to consist in mystical and indefinite feelings in regard to the atonement. It respects Christ as he is revealed in the Gospel. It includes both his person and his work. When you speak of faith as being a general persuasion of the reality of Christ's authority, you are essentially wrong. Many confessed that authority, who were rejected by him. Nicodemus was taught that the belief of this authority was not enough. It was essential to believe that *he was the Son of God*, obviously in the proper sense of that term. But, when you include as an ingredient, in faith, "the reception of his instructions, and submission to his commands," you speak neither Scripture, nor philosophy, nor common sense. Submission to authority is not faith of any kind: it is merely an effect of faith. Is this the man who is to overturn the evangelical school? Learn, Sir, the common meaning of words before you undertake to reform the phraseology of evangelical preachers. To believe and to submit, are as different as cause and effect.

"This it is," you allege, "which keeps them constantly on the strain

to discover, in the term faith, or belief, some extraordinary and mysterious import; it being undeniable, that, in the ordinary sense of the word, their hearers believe already." No mysterious, nor extraordinary meaning is attached to the word faith as it respects salvation. It is never taken to import more or less than its common meaning. But it is maintained, that the man who mistakes the meaning of what is reported to him, does not truly believe it, though he may be conscious of believing it as he apprehends it. Would you say that a person believes any proposition in Euclid, when you find that he does not understand it? Now, as faith will always produce good works, if a man could speak of the gospel, apparently as clearly as an angel of heaven, yet continue in sin, we are warranted to say, not only that he is a wicked man, but that he does not believe the gospel. He is under some mistake about it, though no man may be able to point it out. We never flinch from this assertion, in the most absolute sense, "He that believeth shall be saved."

You ask,—"Do they not discover an evident shyness of approaching to the subject of moral conduct, as if it were dangerous ground to tread upon?" Again, you speak of "their evident disinclination even to read the moral parts of Scripture." I solemnly and distinctly disavow this, on the part of all truly evangelical preachers of every denomination. This is the most licentious calumny. To any man who thoroughly understands the gospel, there is not even the appearance of inconsistency between the simplest preaching of faith, and the most ardent zeal for the abounding of good works. Every part of Scripture, true evangelical preachers value as more precious than diamonds. Is it quite consistent, that the writer who takes so licentious a liberty should adopt the maxim, that his opponents, for the assertion of their views, are worthy of obloquy and invective? Is the ninth commandment no part of the law?

As you speak with coolness with respect to the ordinances of worship, so you speak with laxity with respect to the practices of the school of Satan,—balls, plays, and the misspending of the Sabbath. Refraining from these things, it seems, belongs "to evangelical austerities." So then, your zeal for morality is enlightened and discriminating. It burns for some favourite points of duty, but is lax enough with respect to the first table of the Divine law. The amusements to which you refer are doubtless the works of the flesh, and are included in the "such like," appended to the specifications of Scripture. The stage, as it exists, has been condemned by many moralists, who knew not the gospel of Christ, and were influenced by no higher motive than the welfare of society. But with you, it

seems, it is an innocent amusement for a child of God. It is at least to be countenanced for certain purposes. Are these amusements really innocent? If they are, let them be followed.—If they are not, let no supposed good effect from allowing them, induce us to follow them. Of the man who does evil that good may come, the Scripture says that his damnation is just. But let us take a glance at your arguments for tolerating these practices:—"By drawing the line that separates religion and irreligion too far on the side of the former, they place a great many persons beyond the pale." Sir, the line that separates these territories must be drawn by the Word of God; and our business is not to draw a line, but to discover the line. Instead, then, of being a good thing to draw this line too far on one side, it would be a very wicked thing. Let us not make any thing sin, that is not really sin. Well, but it seems there is danger of placing beyond the pale, persons who are "near the boundary." What a cluster of incongruities is here! How can we put out of the pale, persons who, by the very supposition, are out of it? But, what is still a more wonderful thing, those persons who are placed out of the pale, who were previously without it, might have been kept within it, by a certain process! This is a still more surprising miracle. To keep people within a boundary who are without that boundary, must certainly be a very clever thing. You talk of the juggling of your opponents, with respect to their doctrine of justification by faith; but your own exploits would baffle the skill of the most expert of the Indian Jugglers. How silly do the wisest men appear, when they attempt, by sober argument, to justify sin?

"It can never be too earnestly kept in view," you sagely remark, "that every difficulty we add to religion, is a persuasion to irreligion." What, Sir, have we to do with adding or taking away difficulties with respect to religion? Is it not God only who has a right to forbid, or permit every thing in this respect? Is it a persuasion to irreligion, to tell men that practices contrary to the Word of God, will be at last visited with his vengeance? Your morality is as bad as your doctrine, and your philosophy is as bad as your morality. There is nothing but confusion in your system.

"Next," you say, "if religious persons refuse to countenance what are generally reckoned innocent amusements, these amusements will not be therefore abstained from." But if religious persons do not reckon them innocent amusements, are they to countenance them, in order to catch people by guile? Shall they not tell the thief or the drunkard that he is in danger of hell, because the thief, and the drunkard may continue in their crimes? If the

amusements referred to are in themselves innocent, let them be vindicated on that ground.

"But, being thus left," you say, "entirely in the hands of the worthless, they will acquire a dangerous character, from which they might otherwise have been kept free." This takes it for granted, that they are innocent, and only susceptible of abuse. But your opponents think them all bad. Shall they then engage in things which they account wicked, to prevent others from becoming worse? Shall we join the thief in filthy frauds, to keep him back from doing that which would bring him to the gallows? You speak of your opponents as "placing religion more in the performance of ordinances of worship, than in the regulation of the heart and conduct." Certainly the midnight revels of the ball-room, and the gross impurities of the stage, are admirably calculated to regulate the heart and conduct!

It has always been triumphantly alleged in favour of the evangelical doctrine, that it produces that morality which its opponent possesses only in theory. This you do not attempt to disprove, though in part you endeavour to account for the fact on another principle. But your account is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. "We may admit the fact," you say, "as alleged, in regard to many of the supporters of those opinions; we can even admit that evangelical preaching, may have been the means of bringing to a religious life, persons for whom soberer views would have had no attractions." Now, who are these people? I presume they are very wicked and ignorant people. Well, admitting that such persons are brought to a profession of religion by the evangelical doctrine, what, I ask, is it that makes them moral, seeing their doctrine not only naturally, but necessarily, produces immorality? According to your views, while they are zealous for religious doctrine, they ought to be abandoned to every vice, seeing sin is quite consistent with their salvation. Then, Sir, I reject your philosophy as unsound, while I denounce your religion as infidelity.—You produce an effect, not only without a cause, but contrary to a cause. We can produce thousands of the vilest characters made virtuous by our gospel. If, then, that gospel necessarily leads to licentiousness, what is the cause of that change? You allege that this morality is not the result of our doctrine, but that it arises *in spite of* that doctrine. Now, if this is so, what is that wonderful principle that is so powerful as to produce morality, in spite of a cause that *necessarily* produces immorality?

You allege that "the assumption of such opinions has oftener

been the issue, than the commencement of a pious and virtuous character." But granting, for the sake of argument, that a virtuous life precedes the adoption of these views, why is it not abandoned the moment they are received? Why do men continue to practise what they now see to be useless? Above all, how can they continue virtuous, while the doctrine which they have received necessarily leads to vice. Did you ever know a man believing sin to be harmless, who did not practise it? Sir, there is no philosophy in your reasoning. Besides, I ask, are you as good a judge in this matter as your opponents? Are they not the best judges whether a virtuous life has preceded or followed their alteration of views? Are they not the best judges with respect to the principle that moves them to virtuous actions? Ask every individual of all who are truly born again, through the truth of the gospel by the spirit, and their answer without a single exception will be, that their morality is the effect of their principles.

You have one observation with respect to our argument on this point, to which I by no means object. "If our objections to the evangelical system," you say, "be unsound, let them be exposed; otherwise we cannot allow of even good results being brought about by false representations of religion." I cordially assent to this. Your doctrine is not proved from the Scriptures; no fancied good results can warrant it. But, if our doctrine is the obvious meaning of the whole current of Scripture; if nothing but false reasoning and forced criticism can banish it from the Scriptures, then the fact now referred to, is a most powerful and satisfactory confirmation that our views are just.

"We regard evangelical opinions, then," you say, "as having sprung out of an increase of religious feelings, rather than as having produced it." Will you shew how religious feeling naturally produces such doctrines? Is it not unphilosophical and absurd to speak of religious feeling as the origin of belief? Is not believing the foundation of all human conduct?

"In the estimation, however, usually made of evangelical practice," you say, "there is a fallacy or two to be pointed out. The evangelical party claim a greater zeal for religion in respect of their more frequent attendance on religious ordinances—stricter observance of the Sabbath—abstinence from many amusements," &c. Does not this indicate that *frequent attendance on religious ordinances, strict observance of the Sabbath,* &c. are not considered by you as matter of duty? Now, Sir, as you admit that there are ordinances of Divine appointment, you are self-condemned? If God has appointed or-

dinances, are they not to be strictly observed? I maintain, that not only is frequent attendance on religious ordinances a duty, but that a single day's unnecessary absence from what God has appointed, is a sin. What, Sir, could you say to any one who should reason on the eighth commandment, as you do on the fourth? If one day is the Lord's Day, is it not wholly to be given to the Lord? Is it lawful to turn it into man's day?

"A Roman Catholic," you say, "is not a more religious man than a Protestant, because the latter does not, like the former, do penance or perform pilgrimages." Very true. But have you not admitted that these religious ordinances are Divine appointments? Do you believe that penance and pilgrimages are such? This reasoning is not only disgraceful to philosophers, like the far-famed Edinburgh Reviewers, but is disgraceful to common sense.

In conclusion, you observe, "The folly may have its day, but common sense will ultimately prevail." The opposers of evangelical doctrine, are in the habit of speaking, as if all sound understanding were on their side, and that their adversaries were mere fanatics. I hope, Sir, I have lowered your pulse a little. I have shewn you that there is neither Scripture nor philosophy in the reasoning that expels the evangelical doctrines from the Bible. I undertake to shew, against all the Edinburgh Reviewers, assisted by all the school of German Neology, that it is not possible to banish the evangelical doctrines from the Scriptures, without betraying error in the operations of intellect in their reasoning, and a violation of the laws of language in their criticism.

LETTER V.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH you speak of salvation and atonement, I perceive that you are entirely unacquainted with the plan on which sinful man is accepted by the just and holy God. You make salvation a compound of Divine mercy and human merit. But the Scriptures represent salvation as harmonizing the mercy and justice of God. Man is saved altogether of mercy, yet he is at the same time, in another view, saved altogether in accordance with justice.

The work of Christ becomes the work of the believer by his oneness with him by faith. Every believer is a part of the body of Christ, and what Christ has done for him, thus becomes his own.

The believer died with Christ and has risen with Christ. What you may think, or what I may think, on this subject, independently of the Word of God, is of no value. Let us then for a moment, come to the Scriptures, on this momentous question. May God enlighten your eyes, and grant you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. Let us turn to Rom. iii. 20—28:—"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now, the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Here the Apostle does not speak merely of mercy, but of righteousness, yet of *righteousness without the law.* What strange language is this! Is there any thing but the evangelical doctrine will give meaning to this language?

The sinner obtains righteousness, yet he obtains it without the law, or without himself fulfilling the law. He is made righteous by Christ's fulfilling of the law in his room. That this is the meaning is expressly asserted, for it is added:—"Even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Is there any darkness here? What fair interpretation can avoid our doctrine in this place? Are not believers said here to be justified *freely by his grace*, and that through the redemption of Jesus Christ? Where is there any room for your system in this passage? If the believer is justified freely by grace, how can he justified by his works?

What is still more wonderful, God is here said to be *just* in this way of salvation, and yet to justify the ungodly. How can God be just in forgiving sin? How he is merciful in forgiving sin, it is easy

to discover; but how is the forgiveness of sins just? Through the redemption in Christ. God is faithful and just to forgive the sins for which Christ has accounted. It would be very unjust to make the believer suffer for sins for which Christ has suffered. This would be to pay the same debt twice. The sinner then is saved by faith, in a way in which he becomes completely just—as innocent as the angels of heaven—as pure as the throne of God. Though in themselves believers are sinners, yet in Christ they are perfect in righteousness, and in holiness. Christ sees no deformity in his spouse. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." Now, if God sees no spot in his people, there must be a point of view in which they are without spot; for God perceives things as they are. The salvation that the apostle here speaks of excludes boasting; does your plan of salvation exclude boasting?

Look now to the beginning of the fourth chapter. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Does this language need any commentary? The man who is here represented as justified, worketh not for his justification, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly. I defy any system ever invented by man to give consistency to this language. On all other views but that of justification in Christ, it is a contradiction in terms. If they are ungodly, how are they to be justified? If they are justified, how can they be ungodly? In themselves they are ungodly, the children of wrath by nature as well as others; in Christ there is no unrighteousness in them. They have in him paid their debt: they have suffered the full penalty of the law, and have fully kept all the commandments. Here it is supposed also that believers are saved by God's not imputing sin to them. But if this is so, there must be a point of view in which there is no sin in them; for God, the just God, will impute sin wherever he finds it. But he will not impute sin to believers, because he has imputed it to their substitute and head. He cannot reckon it to both.

Agreeably to this, believers are said, in the beginning of the fifth

chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, not merely to be saved by faith, but to be justified by faith. In Christ Jesus all believers are as righteous as if they had never sinned, but had themselves kept the whole law. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." This plan of salvation, by justification through Christ, is not only the doctrine of Scripture, but is a proof that the Scriptures are not the invention of man. It never could have occurred to man, that it was possible to save him in a way of righteousness. Indeed this is so strange, that men, even after the word of God has come to them, continue to hold their own views, while they profess to receive the Scriptures as the word of God. Man's wisdom could not find out how a sinner could become righteous, and the wise men of this world still continue to reject it, even when they receive the book as Divine, in which the revelation is made. The Scripture then can be no forgery. Man naturally looks for salvation by merit, or by mercy, or by a mixture of merit and mercy. They only who become as little children, will look for a salvation that makes them righteous, while they are in themselves sinners.

In the end of the same chapter, the Apostle asserts that "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." *Grace reigns*, that is, salvation is altogether of grace; in it grace reigns as a sovereign. It has no partner in its throne. But how does grace reign? Does it reign so as to dishonour justice, and to encourage sin? No: it reigns through righteousness. It has provided a sacrifice to take away the sins of those over whom it reigns. It does not injure justice. It gives the law of God all its dues. Christ obeyed its demands in his life; he suffered its penalty in his death. This, Sir, is Paul's gospel; how different is it from yours?

Agreeably to this view, Paul considers his crown of glory as a *crown of righteousness*, and the judge who awards this crown, as *a righteous judge*. Could any man under heaven justly speak in this way, from the merit of his own works? That perfection that the law requires in us, is to be found in Christ, and only in him. Of God he is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The highest angel in heaven must give place to the weakest believer on earth. The angels are represented in a circle without the throne; but believers sit down on the throne of Jesus. As one with him, they can have no superior in heaven, among all the creation of God. All things in heaven, as well as in earth, are

Christ's, and what is Christ's is the believer's: for every believer is a fellow-heir with Christ.

In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul exclaims, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" This imports, that the most imperfect of all those who are saved, are without sin, in Christ. None in heaven or earth can lay any thing to their charge. Christ has paid the debt. Even God himself, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, sees no blame in believers in Christ. They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This is the salvation of the Bible: How different from the salvation which you preach!

You maintain, Sir, that faith, instead of producing good works, will produce the contrary. In this you are at direct issue with the God of the Bible. He has, in many places, solemnly asserted what you have the rashness expressly to deny. In Acts xv. 9.—We read: "and put no difference between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith.*" Here faith is said to be the means of purifying the hearts both of Jews and Gentiles. Who then is the man who takes on him to assert that faith will not purify the heart, but that, on the contrary, it would lead to sin? Peter says:—1 Peter i. 22.—Seeing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren." Here the belief of the truth, through the Spirit, is represented as purifying the souls of men. To obey the truth, is to believe the truth. The gospel calls on men to believe. He who believes, obeys that call; and by the belief of the truth is purified in heart, and, consequently, in life.

1 John iii. 3.—"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Hope is the effect of faith. All hope of being made like Jesus, when he shall appear, is grounded on faith in him as a Redeemer.

Titus ii. 11—14.—"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Thus the grace of the Gospel, instead of leading to sin, teaches those who receive it to deny ungodliness.

Colossians i. 6.—"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the

world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." Those who know the grace of God in truth bring forth fruit from the moment of hearing it.

The Apostle James says:—"Yea a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Faith then must always produce good works.

1 Thess. ii. 13.—"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God, *which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*" Here the Gospel is said to work effectually in those that do believe.

1 John v. 4, 5.—"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Can any thing more expressly refute your doctrine than this? He that is born of God overcomes the world. Faith gives the victory over the world. What faith is it that gives the victory over the world? The faith that Jesus is the Son of God. What regard, Sir, ought we to have to your speculations, in opposition to the express, the clear declarations of the word of the living God? Who are you, that you will presume to grapple with the Almighty? If you will hold your system, give up the Bible. The attempt to oppose the evangelical doctrines, while the Scriptures are admitted as the tribunal of judgment, is as vain as an attempt to overturn the pillars of heaven.

Philosophers, whether as infidels, or under a profession of faith in revelation, have always presumed to treat true Christianity with indignity. The Greek philosophers scorned the doctrine of the apostles as foolishness; and modern Ethical science, more unjust, while it has pilfered from the Bible almost every thing valuable in its various systems, advances positions in fundamental oppposition to revelation. Sometimes this is done with undisguised hostility to the religion of Christ, but oftener with a show of respect for it as the religion of the country. But, Sir, the most dishonourable situation in which it is found, is when it presumes to promulgate its dogmas under the sanction of the word of God, and explain the dictates of the Spirit of God, by the doctrines of the schools. In none of these

characters, however, does it appear a formidable enemy to the simplest Christian, who is aware of the proper mode of defence. All the difficulties that Christians have found in defending the doctrines of grace, have arisen from an undue respect to the authority of systems of philosophy, and a desire to vindicate the unsearchable ways of God. This is an undertaking uncalled for and profane. It is as unwarrantable to attempt to vindicate God in the unfathomable depths of his counsels, as it is to arraign him. If we are assured that it is God who speaks, it is absurd, as well as impious, to demand of him a reason for his conduct. I admit that the light of nature is a revelation previous to that of the Scriptures, and that nothing can be true that is self-evidently contrary to this. If there is not something known without revelation, man is incapable of receiving a revelation, and the grossest contradictions of superstition might claim a sanction from the word of God. But, beyond this range, philosophy is not to be allowed to advance a single step. A contradiction cannot be true; and no revelation can be from God, that professes to teach contradictions. But of the mysterious ways of God, the light of human intellect is not an adequate judge; and from God only can we learn any thing of them. Whatever a properly attested revelation from God teaches of him, or of us, must be submitted to with the most unqualified deference. The pretensions of philosophers on this point, are not only to be resisted as false, but scorned as assuming and unphilosophical. They build on their own fancies as first principles, and disregard principles that are self-evident. As the Scriptures came recommended by the most abundant evidence, Christians are entitled to trample on every dogma of philosophy, that stands in opposition to the doctrine of Christ.

But not only is philosophy an enemy from whom Christianity has nothing to fear, it is one whom she is entitled to despise. Though Christianity is not the wisdom of this world, yet it is the "wisdom of God," and to every person who understands it, it has its evidence in itself. It gives a character of God at once perfect in every attribute, with all his attributes in harmony. It discovers a plan of salvation that never would have presented itself to the human mind, and, therefore, is incapable of being forged; while it gives a ground of hope most completely satisfactory to the conscience, under the deepest conviction of guilt, and apprehension from the Divine justice. To the question, how man, being a sinner, can stand with acceptance in judgment before a just and holy God, it affords

an answer that gives confidence to the chief of sinners who receives the account, while it cuts away every hope from any righteousness in the sinner himself.

It manifests a righteousness so perfect, as to enable the guiltiest sinner on earth, to lift up his head before the tribunal of justice, with the confidence of an angel; while, at the same moment, he looks on himself as having in himself by nature no good thing; and with respect to his own character he exclaims, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Here, then, is a scheme of salvation that brings glory to God with salvation to man. God is just, and the justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus. The law of God, instead of being injured by the intervention of Christ, is magnified and made honourable. But has philosophy given an answer to this question? Never, never, never! No scheme ever formed by it, harmonizes the justice with the mercy of God in man's salvation. And what, Sir, is your doctrine on this point? It is neither law nor Gospel; it is neither philosophy nor Christianity. It is a vain attempt to mix mercy with merit; and reconcile an infidel metaphysics with the grace that brings salvation. With you, God is neither perfectly just nor perfectly merciful: while you speak of atonement, you speak also of salvation by a merciful allowance in judgment. It is quite evident that you have no consistent views on the subject; and that, while you profess to hold the Scriptures as a revelation from God, you oblige them to speak according to your own predilection.

Your doctrine, indeed, is not new, nor is it now exhibited with an unusually imposing address. Your objections to the evangelical doctrines are the same that in every age, unbelief has urged against the Gospel of Christ. In urging them, you have discovered no accuracy of thinking, no vigour of intellect and expression, no deep penetration, or discrimination, that are at all calculated to make us dread you as an adversary. But you have one advantage that will for a time operate in your favour. You have come forward under the sanction of a periodical work of high character and influence among speculative men. With many, it will be a sufficient recommendation of your doctrines, that they are ushered into the world by the Edinburgh Review. But the evangelical doctrines dread not the attack of the proudest school of infidel science. Ingenuity has long expended all its resources in opposing the doctrines of the cross, and every fresh assault will afford Christianity a new triumph. It is not to be doubted, that every instance of opposition to the Gospel of grace, under all the various modifications of unbelief, is a part of the

plan of Him, who in weakness died for his people, but who, now, with all power reigns over all worlds, and regulates every event for the glory of God and the good of his people. Heresies must arise, that they who are approved may be made manifest, but "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his."

THE END.

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